

HB 6800 AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTRONIC BOOK AND DIGITAL AUDIOBOOK LICENSING

March 5, 2023

Dear Distinguished Members of the Planning & Development Committee,

We write to you today on behalf of Colchester's Cragin Memorial Library Board of Trustees in support of the intention of HB 6800 to create a fair and equitable pricing lending model of digital materials.

The beauty and joy—the mission—of public libraries is to give the gift of learning, education and knowledge to everyone in their towns. Libraries have been providing these offerings to their communities for generations. Library staff work extremely hard to curate diverse and varied collections for this purpose.

In a changing world, digital media grants access to young students who may not have a ride to the library, to the homebound who cannot safely visit the library, or to the busy person who is unable to visit during library hours. If a person has access to a digital device, they can now access abundant, accurate knowledge at their fingertips through their library's digital content applications. Moreover, during the recent years of social distancing, we have learned more than ever the importance of growing the library's digital media collection, as Colchester's digital loans grew exponentially.

However, the current state of affairs in regards to pricing and licensing limitations of electronic books and electronic audio books has made curation of a full and diverse collection of such types of digital media all but impossible for our public libraries. We believe that access to electronic books and electronic audio books should be fair and equitable to all, including those who solely access this type of media through their public library.

Current technology allows for the protection of copyright material—keeping users from creating personal copies of the material, returning the material to the library on its due date, and cannot be lost under a couch never to be returned to the library. These protections also provide for better sharing of the material to library patrons. Thus, it should not be argued that libraries loaning digital media create copyright issues.

Our library has a limited amount of funds to spend on growing its collection each year, which I am sure is true for many, if not all, public libraries when public funds have so many pulls on their allocations. The idea that publishers are charging libraries at such higher rates for digital media is hard to swallow.

Approximately three years ago, our board approved the spending of funds to purchase digital copies of books for our local high school's summer reading list, which has made it much easier for students to access the books for the past three summers. However, because of the licensing

limitations that were connected to the purchase of these digital materials, our library may not have these books available for students this summer and will have to spend more money on books that were already purchased at a higher cost than if a person had decided to purchase the book on their own.

We would like to see a bill that represents the interests of both libraries and publishers. A bill that allows libraries to provide a large number of titles; a bill that allows for libraries to maintain those titles for as long as the library desires to; a bill that allows for all segments of society to have access to the convenience of electronic books and electronic audio books.

Respectfully,

Cragin Memorial Library Board of Trustees
Colchester, CT